1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
MA11 Kurd MA11
Yazidis MH10

contrast to the quiet solemnity which is characteristic of Moslems generally in the presence of death, is a most impressive sight. If the deceased has been a person of consequence, military standards are borne in the procession, and, in some places, Kermanshah for instance, the body is accompanied to the grave with music and singing. When the funeral leaves the house, men and women rush wildly out, uttering cries and shrieks, and tearing their hair and clothes. Some raise their hands to heaven, others bow themselves to the earth, and cast dust upon their heads, expressing both in sound and gesture the very abandonment of grief.

The funeral rites of the Yezidis are both peculiar and interesting. When a member of this sect is believed to be at the point of death, a *kawwal* is called in, who pours into the mouth of the moribund a quantity of water. If he should expire before this ceremony has been performed, it is deferred until his body is carried to the grave. The body is laid out with the arms crossed over the breast, and not, as with the Moslems, extended by the sides. In the coffin are placed a piece of bread, some coins, and a stick, for the use of the deceased when the "questioners" appear, for, like the Moslems, the Yezidis believe in *post-mortem* catechists. Should Mounkir, when he arrives, attended by his scribe Nekir, to interrogate him concerning his faith and the character of his life, pronounce him unworthy to cross the threshold of Paradise, the dead man tries to bribe him to alter his decision, first with the bread, then with the silver. If these are unavailing, he resorts

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Yazidis MN10

to coercion, and with the stick opens his own way to heaven.

So long as the body remains in the house hymns are chanted by the *kawwals*, who also accompany the body to the grave, carrying censers, which they swing as they go. For several successive days the friends of the deceased visit his resting-place, men and women in separate parties, every morning and evening, the latter to weep and wail and the former to sit in silence, burning incense the while.[1]

As water is one of the emblems of *Yezd*, the Life-giving Principle, the pouring of it into the mouth of the dying probably signifies, or it may be, is intended to confer, vitality after death, or metempsychosis in some form or other, this doctrine being believed to be held by the Yezidis.

The only change made in their costume by the Kūrdish women as a sign of mourning is the substitution of a black veil for that usually worn out of doors.

[1] Comp. Badger, *The Nestorians, &c.*, p. 131.

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MA11 Kurd MA11
Yazidis MH10

Besides the *djins* and other magical beings, in whose existence the Kūrds, in common with their neighbours of other races, implicitly believe, another class of uncanny visitants, called *sheyts*, excites the awe and dread of these mountain people. These are the apparitions—I will not say ghosts, for, like all Oriental *revenants*, they rise in the body—of martyrs, *i.e.*, Moslems who have died fighting for Islam, and at whose tombs, as at those of Dervish Sheikhs, miracles are believed to be wrought. When they rise from their graves and appear to mortals, which they are said occasionally to do in crowds, it is looked upon as a sign of some important coming event. The Kūrds appear, too, to credit them with habits similar to their own, and look upon them as a kind of fluctuating population, as nomadic as themselves.

The Yezidis, or "Devil-worshippers," whom I have already mentioned as observing marriage and funeral rites differing from those of the Moslem Kūrds, form eight or nine separate tribes, some nomad, some sedentary. The execration in which they are held by Moslems has led to the identification of the supposed founder of the sect with Yezd, the slayer of Hassan and Hussein, the grandsons of the Prophet and martyrs *par excellence* of Islam. This name they, however, no doubt bore long anterior to the seventh century, *Yezd* being one of the titles applied by the ancient Persians to the Supreme Being. The name of Sheikh Adi, a mythical saint, to whom their chief temple is nominally dedicated, is derived, by Mr. Badger,[1] from the Hebrew *Adi* or *Ad*, the two

[1] The Nestorians, &c.

(Arabic, "blessing"), and provides a good example of 778
what is classified as mana in most standard works on
primitive religion, an amorphous supernatural power which
has a seat in certain persons or objects from which it
may be transmitted.

The power of these holy men, unless they themselves
are disturbed in some way, is wholly benevolent. The 776
people of Rowanduz also believe in jinni (the same noun as
in Arabic), spirits who, in contrast, characteristically
cause great harm. There does not appear to be much thought [775]
about ghosts. No one in Rowanduz knew of a house "haunted"
by the spirit of a dead man, and equated the European
notion of "ghost" with that of the jinni. The jinni, for
example, might take possession of a building and drive its
inhabitants out. They are held to be evil spirits who
constitute a separate order of creation, like the birds or
the animals, and are not necessarily related to mankind.
At night one must never pour hot water out of the door [782]
without first saying, "in the name of God." Although [825]
there are no cats in Rowanduz, it was said that one must
never kill such an animal, because "the jinni is born in a
cat and might harm one." When a boy is out walking in the
wild countryside, it is believed that a voice often calls
out to him, "asking him to come and meet the father,"
that is, the parent of the jinni who is the Fallen Angel
Eblis of Islamic demonology. If the boy is foolish and
leaves his path as directed, the jinni throws him from

the mountainside, causing his death. The lesbians led 776
them meets the father of the jinni in fact, for his soul [775]
descends to the inferno. The Kurds also speak of shaytan
("satan," used in the Quran and the Arabic derivations of
the Hebrew word for "adversary"), devilish beings like the
jinni, but of a more congenial and ingenious character
than the jinni. "When the first phonograph was heard in [216]
Rowanduz," Ra'uf Effendi related, "the people said there
was a shaytan in it." There are also tales of malicious [759]
men and women who are able to change themselves into animals,
such as dogs. The townspeople, however, are far from
demon-ridden, and, outside of a few precautions against [521]
jinni, these are largely matters of conversation, pertinent
to the rare discussions of religion in the tea-shops.

In contrast, chesm bad, "the evil eye," is a subject 759
of the greatest concern. One who has the evil eye may by 761
his glance alone bring destruction to a person or an
object. The interesting characteristic of the evil eye is
that its possessor may be unaware of it and is normally
without malice. If, for example, a childless woman looked
on the son of a neighbor, that fleeting moment of jealousy
and malevolence she experiences, which is, in a way, the
evil eye itself, can cause the death of the child in
question. Ra'uf Effendi's son had sickened and died, and
he states flatly that this had been due to the evil eye.
Further, it is believed that the individual who at one
time or another has this unfortunate power cannot always